

of our country are saddened by the fact that a Cabinet Minister was assassinated. It's just unacceptable behavior. I also told him that we continue to call upon Chairman Arafat to do everything he can to bring the killer to justice. It's very important that he arrest the person who did this, or those who did this act, and continue to arrest those who would disrupt and harm Israeli citizens. He must—he must show the resolve necessary to bring peace to the region.

And finally, I did express our concern about troops in Palestinian territory, and I would hope the Israelis would move their troops as quickly as possible.

Q. Did you get any satisfaction?

The President. Well, he's a very thoughtful man. He's a friend, a friend of America's, and I listened very carefully.

Your first question was?

Linkage of Terrorist Acts

Q. The link between September 11th and—

The President. Well, we don't have any hard evidence. But there's no question that anybody who would mail anthrax with the attempt to harm American citizens is a terrorist. And there's no question that Al Qaida is a terrorist organization. So it wouldn't put it past me that there—you know, it wouldn't surprise me that they're involved with it. But I have no direct evidence.

I do know that this country is strong enough to endure, to endure the evil ones. And we're making great progress on the ground in Afghanistan, and we'll bring the Al Qaida to justice, and we'll—we're doing everything we can to find out who mailed these letters.

Stretch [Richard Keil, Bloomberg News].

President's Health

Q. Mr. President, have you been tested for anthrax?

The President. I don't have anthrax.

Q. So you've been tested, sir?

The President. I don't have it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 4:48 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Foreign Minister Shimon Peres of Israel and Chairman Yasser

Arafat of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Northern Ireland

October 23, 2001

I warmly welcome the announcement by the Chairman of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning, General John de Chastelain, that a significant act of decommissioning has been carried out by the IRA and verified by the Commission. This is an historic step by the IRA. The people of Northern Ireland are now measurably closer to the lasting peace which they richly deserve.

I hope all paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland will build on today's events, striving to achieve the total disarmament called for by the Good Friday agreement. I know I speak for all Americans when I express my heartfelt appreciation to General de Chastelain for his continuing efforts in support of the peace process. This act of decommissioning will, I hope, lead to the full functioning of the political institutions of the Good Friday agreement. All leaders should be prepared to intensify their efforts to resolve remaining outstanding issues.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report of the Railroad Retirement Board

October 23, 2001

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith the Annual Report of the Railroad Retirement Board for Fiscal Year 2000, pursuant to the provisions of section 7(b)(6) of the Railroad Retirement Act and section 12(1) of the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act.

George W. Bush

The White House,
October 23, 2001.

**Remarks to Employees of the Dixie
Printing and Packaging Corporation
in Glen Burnie, Maryland**

October 24, 2001

Thank you all very much. Please be seated. Newth, thank you very much. And Ray and Susan Blavatt, thank you for being here, as well. I'm glad my SBA Director is here; Hector Barreto is in charge of the Small Business Association. And Hector, thank you for coming. I want to thank the employees of Dixie Printing and my fellow Americans.

Some might ask why, in the midst of war, I would come to Dixie Printing. They say, "Here you are conducting a campaign against terrorists, and you take time to come to a small business." And the answer is, because we fight in the war on two fronts. We fight a war at home, and part of the war we fight is to make sure that our economy continues to grow.

When the terrorists struck our homeland, they thought we would fold. They thought our economy would crater. That's what they wanted. But they don't understand America. They don't understand the entrepreneurial spirit of our country. They don't understand the spirit of the working men and women of America. They don't understand that small-business owners all across our country are saying, "We're not going to allow you to terrorize us." We're going to make sure our—[applause].

I am here to report that we're doing well on both fronts. Overseas, our diplomatic efforts are strong. Nations all across the globe have bound with the United States to send a clear message that we'll fight terrorism wherever it may exist.

Recently I was in China. I had an interesting meeting, as you can imagine, with the President of Russia, the head of China, Mexico, Chile—were all represented. And to a leader, from all kinds of nations, some Muslim, some not, the people said, "We stand with America. We stand with America in our noble goal of finding the evildoers and bringing them to justice."

As you know, I have asked our military to take an active role in the campaign. I set out a doctrine to America that said the following: Not only will we hold terrorists accountable

for their activities, we will also hold those accountable, those nations accountable that harbor them, that hide them, that try to feed them. And that's exactly what we're doing in Afghanistan.

I gave the Afghan Government, the Taliban Government, plenty of time to respond to the demands of the United States. I said, "You must hand over the Al Qaida leadership which hides in your country." I said, "You must free those who you illegally detain in your country." And I said, "You must destroy the camps that have been used to train the terrorists." And they had time to respond, and they didn't respond positively, and therefore, they're paying a price.

Our military is conducting a campaign to bring the terrorists to justice, not to harm the Afghan people. While we are holding the Taliban Government accountable, we're also feeding Afghan people. You need to be proud of the United States military. It's doing its job. It is slowly but surely encircling the terrorists so that we'll bring them to justice. We're patient. We're firm. We have got a strategy that is going to work. And make no mistake about it, justice will be done.

But there is another front in this war, and the front is here at home. It's something that, obviously, we're not used to in America. We've had oceans which have protected us over our history. Except for Pearl Harbor, we've never really been hit before. And yet, on September 11th, this great land came under attack. And it's still under attack as we speak. Anybody who puts poison in mail is a terrorist. Anybody who tries to affect the lives of our good citizens is evil.

I'm oftentimes asked by our friends in the press, do I know if there's a direct connection between what took place on September the 11th and what's happening today. I have no direct evidence, but there are some links. Both series of actions are motivated by evil and hate. Both series of actions are meant to disrupt Americans' way of life. Both series of actions are an attack on our homeland. And both series of actions will not stand.

It's important for the American people to know our Government is doing everything we can on both fronts of this war. On the homefront, we've got an Office of Homeland Security, the job of which is to organize and